

A VISIT TO THE THEATRE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME



Imagine you are living in 1592, Shakespeare's time, and you are going to the theatre. You set off at lunchtime. All plays take place during the day because there isn't electricity.

When you arrive at the **Globe Theatre** you can see a flag flying from the roof which means that there is a performance today. People are crazy for the theatre, they want to see their favourite actors. About 21,000 Londoners go to the theatre every week.



The play begins at 2 o'clock and there is a loud shot to up hurry people.

You enter the building and see the stage in front of you. Two pillars on the **stage** support a roof for the actors. This is called the '**Heavens**' and is painted with stars, a sun and a moon.



At the back of the stage is the **musicians' gallery**. Musicians with trumpets, drums and other instruments play tunes and make sound effects.

You will see lots of different types of people.

At the top of the building there are **galleries** where merchants, sea-captains and clerks sit. They paid for their seats. There are '**Gentlemen's Rooms**' or boxes for rich and famous people.



Finally the lower class citizens, or servants and apprentices, are standing in front of the stage and are known as '**groundlings**.' It's not always fun for the people standing there because sometimes a play can last four hours!

Now the play starts. Don't be surprised when the actors playing the female parts are not women. Young men play women parts.



Women are not allowed to act in 1592 because it is considered shameless and unladylike.

The audience make a lot of noise during performances - more like spectators at a modern football match than a visit to see a play - cheering, hissing, clapping, booing and crying.



So sit down and enjoy the show, but remember to keep a lookout for pickpockets as they also have a good time at the theatre!



Read through the questions and write your answers.

1. Why did all the plays take place during daylight hours?
2. What time exactly did the performances begin?
3. What did it mean when the flag was flying on top of the theatre?
4. How many people visited the theatre in one week in London in 1592?
5. Why, do you think, stars, a sun and a moon were painted on the roof above the stage?

